Grade 8 – Expository Writing Work Sample: Meets

Task: Your class is studying about the human nervous system and the brain. You are given three articles about the brain and how it impacts memory.

*Read the sources carefully to **write an explanatory article** about improving memory. Using more than one source, select the most relevant information to support your thesis/controlling idea about memory.*

Scores, Justification of Student Evidence, and Suggested Areas of Student Improvement

Ideas and Content: 4

The essay clearly explains the three types of memory and provides several accurate strategies for improving memory using Source 2. It uses relevant information from the sources and maintains focus on memory improvement. However, explanations are sometimes general, repetitive, or uneven in depth. The essay describes what each type of memory is but only partially explains how memory training works in connection to these processes. Overall, it demonstrates solid understanding with room for more precise development and source integration.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Controlling Idea and Purpose** ○ States a clear purpose in the introduction: people can improve memory by "exercising their brain." ○ Maintains an explanatory focus on "three types of memory" and "abstract techniques" for remembering. ○ Returns to this purpose in the conclusion: "there are many ways to improve your memory."
✓ **Relevant and Accurate Details** ○ Accurately defines sensory memory: "remembers things for a split second… only clings to pictures and ideas for a few seconds." ○ Uses correct information from Source 1 about short-term memory: "Short-term memory stores what you are actively thinking about at any given moment." ○ Includes vivid, accurate imagery from Source 2: "Picture a building you know well… marshmallows strung like pearls… chocolate bars popping out of the toaster." ○ References the long-term memory quote from Source 1: "stored vast amounts of information… Much more than an encyclopedia!"
✓ **Development and Elaboration** ○ Provides clear examples to illustrate memory strategies, such as associating names with objects ("Briana" sounds like "banana") and using a memory palace for shopping lists. ○ Some reasoning explains the process ("If you keep thinking about a specific thing… it will get stuck in your long-term memory"). ○ However, several explanations stop at describing techniques without explaining *why* they work (e.g., encoding, visualization, repetition). ○ Parts of the narrative rely on storytelling ("your mother needed you to grab ingredients for s'mores") instead of deepening analysis.
✓ **Focus and Relevance** ○ Stays focused on memory processes and strategies throughout the essay. ○ The second half shifts slightly toward anecdotal storytelling, which distracts from the informational purpose. ○ Repeated conclusions ("to conclude") signal closure but do not synthesize insights from the essay.

Organization: 4

The essay has a clear introduction, a logical structure (three types of memory → strategies → conclusion), and generally effective transitions. Some paragraphs combine multiple ideas, and the conclusion is repetitive rather than synthesizing insights. Overall, the structure supports comprehension but lacks the precision and cohesion of a 5.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization
✓ **Clear and Purposeful Introduction** ○ Opens with a clear frame: "People can improve their memory by exercising their brain." ○ Introduces the three types of memory to be explained.
✓ **Logical Sequencing of Ideas** ○ Follows a logical flow: sensory memory to short-term memory to long-term memory to strategies for improving memory. ○ Order reflects the structure of the sources.
✓ **Transitions Support Movement** ○ Uses clear transitions such as "The first type of memory…," "To conclude the second type…," and "One more technique…" ○ However, some transitions are repetitive ("to conclude") and do not always show relationships.
✓ **Conclusion Provides Closure but Lacks Synthesis** ○ Ends with: "To conclude there are many ways to improve your memory," which restates rather than synthesizes. ○ Final paragraph does not clearly tie the three types of memory back to the strategies.

Voice: 3

The voice is friendly and engaging, showing awareness of the reader. However, frequent conversational moments, direct address, and imagined scenarios shift tone away from a formal informational style. At times, the voice becomes more narrative than explanatory.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice
✓ **Engaging and Accessible Tone** ○ Uses friendly openings ("Have you ever had trouble remembering something important?"). ○ Adds personality through examples and rhetorical questions.
✓ **Conversational and Informal Language** ○ Uses lines such as "your mother needed you to grab ingredients," "the new kid in your class," and "make up random images." ○ These reduce the informational tone.
✓ **Occasional Shift Into Storytelling Voice** ○ The shopping list scenario and several hypothetical examples sound narrative rather than explanatory.
✓ **Awareness of Audience but Inconsistent Tone** ○ Attempts to speak directly to the reader, but this sometimes becomes directive rather than informative.

Word Choice: 4

Vocabulary is mostly clear and accurate, including correct use of memory-related terms. Some words are general or informal, and a few examples rely on imaginative imagery rather than precise terminology. Overall, word choice is effective but not consistently precise.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice
✓ **Correct Domain Vocabulary** ○ Accurately uses “sensory memory,” “short-term memory,” “long-term memory,” and “memory palace.”
✓ **Clear Descriptions of Cognitive Processes** ○ Describes sensory memory as “remembers things for a split second,” which is understandable and source-aligned.
✓ **General or Informal Phrasing** ○ Uses phrases such as “get stuck in your long-term memory,” “stuff you have seen before,” and “make up random images.”
✓ **Overreliance on Story-Based Vocabulary** ○ Examples such as “your backyard hose” and “new kid in your class” prioritize vividness over scientific precision.

Sentence Fluency: 4

Sentences are generally varied and easy to follow. Some are long or loosely connected, and transitions between ideas sometimes repeat or feel formulaic. Overall fluency supports comprehension but lacks the sophistication of a 5.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Variety in Sentence Structure** ○ Uses both simple and complex sentences effectively.
✓ **Mostly Smooth Flow** ○ Ideas progress logically, and sentences are readable.
✓ **Occasional Long or Rambling Sentences** ○ Example: “If you keep thinking about a specific thing… it will get stuck in your long-term memory,” which combines multiple ideas loosely.
✓ **Repetitive Transitions** ○ Repeats phrases like “to conclude” and “one more technique,” reducing fluency.

Conventions: 4

The writing demonstrates generally strong control of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. A few sentences contain unnecessary commas or missing commas, but errors do not interfere with meaning.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions
✓ **Spelling Is Accurate** ○ All memory-related terms spelled correctly: “sensory,” “short-term,” “long-term,” “abstract,” “information.”
✓ **Generally Strong Grammar** ○ Sentences are complete with no fragments or significant run-ons.
✓ **Minor Comma Usage Issues** ○ Missing commas after introductory clauses (“To conclude the first type of memory”). ○ Occasional unnecessary commas within sentences.
✓ **Consistent Capitalization** ○ Proper nouns and key concepts are correctly capitalized.

Use of Sources: 4

The essay draws from all three sources, accurately explaining key ideas about sensory, short-term, and long-term memory and describing memory palace techniques. Most evidence is accurate, but attribution is inconsistent. Explanations sometimes rely on storytelling rather than integrating source-based reasoning.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources
✓ **Uses All Three Sources** ○ Source 1: accurately defines the three types of memory. ○ Source 2: uses vivid examples of the memory palace technique. ○ Source 3: briefly mentions learning techniques but lacks deeper details.
✓ **Evidence Is Accurate and Relevant** ○ Correct details about how long-term memory stores “vast amounts of information… much more than an encyclopedia.”
✓ **Limited Attribution** ○ Some details are clearly from sources but lack explicit signal phrases.
✓ **Uneven Explanation of Evidence** ○ Memory palace descriptions are vivid but not fully linked to how memory works. ○ Source 3 is referenced lightly and without deeper explanation.